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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on defining and comparing four approaches for identifying the community's power actors. It outlines how professional change agents might use each of the four approaches to identify community power actors who are relevant for community development. The four approaches include the positional, the reputational, the decision-making, and the social participation. The positional approach assumes that the power to affect community decisions rests in the important positions of formal organizations in the community. The reputational approach identifies power actors behind-the-scenes who have a reputation for influencing decision making. The decision-making approach emphasizes the actual participation in decisions as the criterion for identifying community power actors. The social participation theory holds that power to affect community decisions is acquired through participation and office holding in the community's voluntary associations. Since each of the approaches contains limitations and tends to identify a different type of power actor, a combination of the four approaches is recommended for professional change agents. Specific techniques for applying each of the approaches are described. (Author/DE)

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IDENTIFYING THE COMMUNITY POWER ACTORS

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John L. Tait, Joe M. Bohlen, and Edward A. Wedman**

INTRODUCTION

The major objective of this paper is to focus on the various approaches for identifying the community's power actors. Specifically, there are three objectives:

1. To define four different approaches for identifying the community's power actors.

   In each approach, the basic assumptions, the procedures, the types of power actors identified, and the advantages and limitations of the approach will be discussed.

2. To compare the four approaches for identifying the community's power actors.

   The major questions to be asked include:
   a. Do the four approaches identify the same power actor pool?
   b. If not, what different types of community power actors are likely to be identified by each of the four approaches?

3. To outline how professional change agents might use each of the four approaches to identify community power actors who are relevant for community development.

   Specifically, a suggested procedure of how each of these approaches can be applied will be presented. Since each approach may be used in different ways, hopefully, the suggested procedures may initiate other ways in which the approach may be used by professional change agents.

FOUR APPROACHES FOR IDENTIFYING POWER ACTORS

There are numerous approaches which have been used by social scientists to identify community power actors. And social scientists have often used

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different criteria and procedures in making use of each approach. These various approaches can be adapted by professional change agents to identify community power actors. For the purposes of this paper, four approaches were selected which have been used by both social scientists and professional change agents in identifying community power actors. These four approaches are:

1. The positional
2. The reputational
3. The decision making---sometimes called the event analysis or the decisional approach.
4. The social participation---which some have referred to as the social activity approach.

Each of these four approaches will be presented in turn focusing on the assumptions, the procedures, the types of power actors identified and the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Positional Approach

1. Assumptions

One of the first approaches to identifying community power actors was the positional approach. The major assumption is that the power to effect community decisions rests in the important positions of formal organizations in the community. The individuals who occupy key formal authority positions in the major social, economic, political, cultural and religious institutions are defined as the community power actors. In addition to being in formal authority positions, they also often have control over important resources which are often needed for community development programs.

The success or failure of the positional approach to the identification community power actors depends upon the degree to which its basic assumption is valid: those holding positions of authority actually make key decisions, while those who do not occupy such positions do not make any key decisions.

2. Procedures

The procedures for using the positional approach include selecting power actors on the basis of occupying important positions in formal organi-

zations. Most of the studies have used different criteria for establishing which positions are relevant for community decision-making. For example, one researcher defined the following as key positions:

Political Institution	Economic Institution
Mayor City Council Members Chairman of Republican and Democratic Political Parties	Heads of all industries employing 75 or more workers. Heads of all banks with assets in excess of $1,000,000. Persons who were members of boards of directors of two or more of these industries and/or banks, thus serving as "interlocking" directors of the dominant economic units.

The researcher or professional change agent must establish some criteria as to which formal positions are relevant for community decision making.

3. Types of Power Actors Identified

Elected Political Leaders--mayor, city council members, judges, school board members, etc.

Higher Civil Servants and Political Appointees--heads of city departments and agencies, appointed board members, chairman of political parties.

Corporation Executives-heads of the major corporations, business and financial institutions.

Officeholders in Voluntary Associations--presidents of chamber of commerce, business organizations, service clubs, industrial development corporations, etc.

Other Formal Office Holders--presidents of women's associations, League of Women Voters, AAUW, labor unions, etc.

4. Advantages

The major advantage to the positional approach is that community power actors are visible, thus easily identified. One defines which positions are relevant for community decision-making and then develops a list of the incumbents fulfilling those positions.

A second major advantage is that there is little cost involved in developing a list of community power actors using the positional approach.

5. Limitations

There are several limitations of the positional approach.

First, some positional power actors do not exercise their potential. e.g., the mayor may be a figurehead and not exercise the power invested in his office to effect community affairs. Also, the head of an absentee-owned corporation may not exercise power in community affairs except where corporation interests are at stake.

Second, the positional approach fails to identify power actors who are not in formal positions, e.g., those power actors who operate behind the scenes and are not in formal positions. Example, a very influential power actor in a key voluntary association may not be in an office within that association.

A third limitation is the question of which positions hold power and which ones do not hold power to affect community decision-making.

Reputational Approach

1. Assumptions

In the 1950's, the reputational approach was developed as an approach to identifying community power actors as the result of Hunter's classical study of the power structure in Atlanta, Georgia. The major assumption is that power to effect community decisions is the consequence of reputation. This approach assumes that leadership is too complex to be indexed directly; therefore, this approach assesses the reputation for leadership. It also assumes that community power actors cannot be solely identified by observing directly who participates in public meetings, board meetings, etc., but that there are some power actors who are concealed and not visible who operate behind the scenes to affect community decisions.

2. Procedures

The basic procedure of identifying community power actors through the use of the reputational approach involves interviewing knowledgeables within the community. Knowledgeables are defined as community members who have a broad general knowledge of the community decision-making processes. They are defined as individuals who can identify those power actors who have the power to affect a number of community issue areas. Knowledgeables may include:

Bankers
Newspaper editors
Extension workers
Secretaries of Chamber of Commerce
Local Government officials-city clerk, long time office holder
Utility company personnel
Ministers
Union leaders

After identifying a number of community knowledgeables, the researcher or the professional change agent interviews the knowledgeables with a questionnaire to determine the reputed community power actors. This may involve the following:

1. One Step Process-

A set of knowledgeables is asked to provide a list of community power actors. The types of questions asked varies. For example, one researcher asked the following question: "Now who would you say are the five people in (community name) whose opinions on community affairs you respect most." Another example of a question asked in another research project was as follows:

> "Suppose a major project were before the community, one that required a decision by a group of leaders whom nearly everyone would accept. Which people would you choose to make up this group--regardless of whether or not you know them personally?"

2. Two Step Process-

The two-step procedure differs in that lists of power actors in various institutions or community sectors are first compiled by the researcher or professional change agent. The second step involves giving the lists of power actors to a panel of judges in the community who select those who are reputed to have the most power to affect decisions.

In either the one step or the two step process, the researcher or professional change agent must then decide on "cutting points", that is, he must decide how many roles are necessary in order to be included in the pool of community power actors.

3. Types of Power Actors Identified

The reputational approach tends to identify general power actors who are "behind the scenes" as well as power actors who are visible to the general public. Generally, this approach identifies the economic dominants (executives of major corporations, businessmen, bankers, financial leaders), elected officials who are reputed to be power holders, professionals (lawyers, doctors, dentists) and political leaders.

4. Advantages

There are several advantages of the reputational approach. This approach identifies community power actors who operate "behind the scenes" as well as power actors who are visible. "Behind the scenes" power actors are community power actors who may not participate in the public forum but may play major roles in formulating policies and decisions through informal processes. They may also exercise influence to prevent some problem areas from becoming community issues.

Another advantage of the reputational approach is that you can determine the reputed community power actors for a number of community issue areas if these issue areas are built into the questionnaire design used by the professional change agent.

Another advantage is the relative ease with which the reputational approach may be utilized. Interviews can be conducted with a reasonable number of community knowledgeables. More information about the specific use of the reputational approach will be presented when we focus on how the four approaches may be used by professional change agents.

5. Limitations

The question often arises about whether the knowledgeables selected are in fact knowledgeable about community affairs. This limitation can be reduced to some extent by increasing the number of community knowledgeables which one interviews.

Another limitation of the reputational approach is that the reputed community power actors may or may not actually exercise power to affect community decisions. The criticism has been made, particularly by some political scientists, that the reputed power holders may not actually participate in making community decisions. It is said by the critics that the reputational approach identifies community power actors who have social status in the community, but who do not participate in actual decision-making.

Finally, the criticism is made by the opponents of this approach that the approach tends to identify an "elitist" structure of generalized social status, but fails to recognize the specialization by issue areas in community affairs. Thus, it fails to identify the specialized power holders, e.g. the school superintendent who participates only in school issues, the recreational power holder who only participates on recreational issues facing the community.

Some of these limitations may be minimized by development and refinement of the research design and questionnaire construction or combining the reputational approach with other approaches in identifying community power actors.

Decision-Making Approach

1. Assumptions

In response to the reputational approach, Dahl and others developed the decision-making approach. The basic assumption underlying this approach is that power is acquired through participation in decision-making processes. Actual participation in decisions is established as the criterion for identifying the community power actors.

2. Procedures

In this approach, the social scientist or the professional change agent selects a number of community decisions that are supposedly representative of all community decisions. He then examines these actual decisions through observation, newspapers, documents or interviews to determine who was involved and what they did. Through this process, the researcher or professional change agent can determine behavior rather than reputation. He can also determine the actual possession and use of resources, not just the reputation for having them.

Through analyzing a number of community decisions from initiation through the execution and final stages of the decision, the roles of the participants can be determined at each stage of the issue. This permits the researcher or professional change agent to delineate the extent to which the community leaders who make the policy decisions on each issue also actively participate in the action or implementation phases to execute the policy decisions.

In New Haven, Connecticut, Dahl examined decisions in three issue areas: urban renewal between 1950 and 1959; the public schools during the same period; and nomination for mayor, 1941-1957.

3. Types Of Powers Actors Identified

The community power actors identified in this approach are those power actors who were active or instrumental in resolution of community issues. If several community decisions are studied, one can establish whether the community power actors are (1) generalized power actors, i.e., participate as decision-makers on several community issues, or (2) specialized power actors, i.e., appears as a decision-maker on only one major community decision. Since this method studies actual behavior rather than reputed power, the community power actors identified are visible leaders.

4. Advantages

The advantages of the decision-making approach include determining the actual behavior rather than the reputation for power. Since the actual behavior of community power actors who participate in several issue areas is determined, one can determine the actual overlap of power from one issue to another. Through analyzing several issue areas, the specialized community power actors who affect only one issue area can be traced and their actual role determined. Another advantage of the decision-making approach is that roles can be identified at each stage of the action program.

5. Limitations

One of the limitations from the standpoint of social scientists and professional change agents is that studying a number of representative community decisions is rather time consuming and costly. If one is to determine whether one power structure affects the decisions in all major issues before the community or several power structures, each varying from one major issue to the next, then several issues must be studied.

Since the decision-making approach assumes that actual behavior is a measure of leadership, it fails to determine whether some community power actors operated "behind the scenes" to affect the decisions. The decision-making approach also ignores power actors who may be able to keep latent issues from emerging into open controversy.

Social Participation Approach

1. Assumptions

In the social participation approach, the assumption is that power to affect community decisions is acquired through participation and holding offices in the community's voluntary associations. Those who are active

in community affairs are defined as the community members who actively participate as members, officers, committee members and other activities in voluntary associations.

2. Procedures

The procedures for using the social participation approach involve determining which members of the community have the highest social participation in voluntary associations. Different criteria may be used to determine social participation. A number of studies have developed rough indexes of memberships in voluntary associations. Other studies have included the offices held and membership in various committees. Through developing an index or score for each member in the voluntary associations, it can be determined which community members have the highest levels of participation.

3. Types of Power Actors Identified

This approach identifies the active participants in various activites of voluntary associations. If a number of voluntary associations are studied, one can determine the overlaps of memberships among the various voluntary associations. This approach identifies community members who become highly involved in action phases of voluntary associations.

4. Advantages

The major advantage of this approach is that it identifies power actors who are active in community affairs. Since some of the studies of community leadership have found that key community power actors have been very active in voluntary associations prior to becoming a key community power actor, this approach may also be used to identify younger members of the community who are actively participating in voluntary associations and who aspire to someday become key power actors. Also, an advantage of the social participation approach is that it identifies community members who actively participate in the action phases of community issues.

5. Limitations

There are several limitations to the social participation approach. First, this approach is time consuming and costly for both the social scientist and the professional change agent. If you are going to study several of the major voluntary associations in the community, this requires the collection of data on membership, officers, committees and other activities for

each of the voluntary associations which are studied.

Another limitation is that this approach identifies only the active power actors in community affairs and not the power actors who operate behind the scenes. Also, there is the question of the extent to which the power actors identified through the social participation approach are in fact the decision makers on key community issues. The research findings tend to support the idea that many of those who formulate community policies and participate in community decision making, while holding memberships in key voluntary associations in the community, are not currently officers or active participants in voluntary associations. When one analyzes the past behavior of key community power actors, they have often held memberships (and continue to), served as offices, and participated actively in voluntary associations. Participation in voluntary associations may be perceived as the training ground for developing key community power actors.

Finally, the study of social participation in the voluntary associations fails to identify the specific issues in which the high score participators are likely to be decision-makers or active participants.

COMPARISON OF APPROACHES

One of the major questions facing social scientists and professional change agents is "Which approach shall I use to identify the community power actors?" Much of the literature on social power has been critical of the methodological approaches to community leadership. In more recent years, social scientists have become more concerned with the methodological aspects of community leadership. Although comparative studies using the various methods have been few to date, a number of partial contrasts have been published as well as a few systematic overall comparative studies been completed.

A major comparative study was conducted by Freeman, et. al., in a study of leadership in the Syracuse, New York metropolitan area. They identified community power actors by determining the power actors through four approaches, namely, decision-making, social participation, reputational and positional. The basic objective was to determine the extent to which these four approaches would identify the same persons as being in the top leadership category. The procedures used in using each approach were generally similar to those previously outlined.

In comparing the research findings, Freeman found there was not high agreement among the top 32 leaders identified by each approach with the exception of the comparison of the reputational and positional approaches. If there was perfect overlap between the two approaches, there would be 100 percent agreement by comparing the two approaches. The comparison of the two approaches indicated a 74 percent overlap.

When the reputational approach is compared to the social participation and decision-making approaches, the percentage overlaps were 25 and 33 respectively, while the overlap percentages for the comparison of the positional approach with the social participation and decision-making approaches was 22 and 39. The overlap percentage between the social participation and decision-making approaches was 25. Freeman concluded that reputation for leadership seems to derive primarily from position, not from participation.

Freeman identified three basic types of leaders in Syracuse through the use of the four approaches. The reputational and positional approaches tended to identify what Freeman termed the "institutional leaders." These power actors were frequently the same individuals who were the heads of the largest and most actively participating business, industrial, governmental, political, professional, educational, labor and religious organizations. The activity of the "institutional leaders" may be limited to that of lending prestige or legitimizing the solutions provided by others. For the most part, the institutional leaders in Syracuse were not active participants in community affairs.

The "effectors" in Syracuse were largely identified through the decision-making approach. They became involved as active workers in the actual process of community decision-making. Effectors were government personnel and professional participants. Other effectors were employees of the large private corporations directed by the institutional leaders. Freeman concluded that these men carried the most weight in effecting community change.

The third type of leaders was the "activist". They were identified through the social participation approach. These leaders were action oriented and often held offices in the voluntary organizations, community service organizations and clubs. The activists participated in community decision-making, although they were not as highly involved as the effectors. Freeman concluded that the various approaches seem to uncover different types of leaders.

Another comparative study was conducted by Blankenship in two New York communities, Mapleton and West Valley. These two communities were approximately 6,000 and 8,500 in population.

Blankenship compared the reputational and decision-making approaches. The procedures used were similar to those outlined above for these two approaches.

The top 14 leaders as identified through the reputational approach were compared with the top 14 leaders in each of five community issue areas as determined by the decision-making approach. The same procedures were followed in both communities.

In Mapleton, the overlap percentages for the comparison of the influentials and the decision-makers in the five issue areas studied ranged from 16.6% for the municipal building-fire hall issue to 57.1% for obtaining a new industry. The overlap percentages in West Valley ranged from 35.7% for obtaining a new industry to 62.5% for a flood control project.

A number of power actors were found in both communities who were identified by the decision-making approach as playing roles in one or another of the five decisions. For the most part, these power actors who tended to specialize in only one or two issue areas were not identified through the reputational approach. Power actors who participated in three or more of the five decisions as determined by the decision-making approach tended to be identified through the reputational approach as having a general reputation for power in community affairs.

Blankenship concluded that there was considerable overlap in the results produced by the two approaches. It would appear that the power actors who participate in making decisions in several issue areas are also generally recognized as having a reputation for power. The reputational method as used in the Blankenship study tended to not identify the power actor who participates as a decision-maker in only one issue area. In comparison with the Freeman study, Blankenship did not find as great a discrepancy between the power actors identified through the reputational and decision-making approaches.

There is not a simple answer to the question "Do the four approaches identify the same power actor pool?" Freeman found a high degree of agreement between the reputational and positional approaches, but a low degree of agreement through the comparison of other approaches. Blankenship found that

there was overlap in the pools identified through the decision-making and reputational approaches although differences occurred.

In terms of types of leaders identified, the positional approach will likely identify the institutional leaders, the office holders and the visible leaders. The reputational approach will tend to identify the reputed leaders, the generalized leaders and both visible and non-visible leaders. Through using the decision-making approach, generalized and specialized effectors, actual leaders and visible leaders are likely to be identified, while the social participation approach will likely identify the activists, the voluntary association leaders and visible leaders.

In summary, the four approaches have some tendency to identify different power actor pools. Also, there is the tendency to identify different types of leaders when using the different approaches. Since research findings are inconclusive at this stage, the findings suggest that professional change agents use a combination of approaches or combine elements from the four approaches into one approach.

USE OF APPROACHES BY PROFESSIONAL CHANGE AGENTS

The final section will outline how professional change agents might use each of the four approaches to identify community power actors who are relevant for community development. The particular approach(es) selected by the change agent will vary depending upon the objectives for community development, the types of leaders one desires to identify, the time available to allocate to the identification process and the costs involved.

Positional Approach

In the positional approach, the change agent would determine what positions within the community are relevant for community development. The relevant positions might include the local elected officials; (mayor, city council, school board); appointed civil servants (city manager, city attorney, city planner, etc.); business and financial leaders (corporation executives, bank presidents, board members of corporations, banks and savings and loan associations); elected officials of key voluntary associations (Chamber of

Commerce, service clubs, women's clubs, recreation associations, taxpayers groups, educational associations, planning associations, etc.); and others.

The change agent might develop a generalized list of relevant positions whose incumbents may likely participate in several community development issues. Certain authority positions (e.g. the mayor and city council) will likely have power to affect several or most community issues.

Other formal positions may be primarily oriented to single issue areas. The Superintendent of Schools may be a relevant position for educational issue areas but not for other issue areas such as health, industrialization, energy, the environment and culture. If the change agent is primarily concerned with onr or two issue areas, e.g. health and recreation, then it may be desireable to develop a list of relevant positions for these specific issue areas.

After determining the relevant positions, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the incumbents of these positions can be obtained. While it may appear that this would require considerable time on the part of the change agent, directories are often published on a yearly basis by the Chamber of Commerce, the city government, planning associations and voluntary association bureaus. In Iowa, one city annually publishes a directory of officials and representatives of agencies and groups. The change agent might check out these sources to determine if lists are already available.

If directories are not available, the change agent will need to develop his/her own directory. If a directory is not available, it may suggest a community development project. In one Iowa community of approximately 30,000, a small group of women identified all the voluntary associations, their purposes and their officers. Approximately 215 voluntary associations were identified. The information was supplied to the Chamber of Commerce which made plans to update it on a yearly basis. Directories of officers of voluntary associations, agencies, companies and others should be maintained and updated on a yearly basis. Also, as new relevant positions are created within the community, they should be added to the positional lists. With changes in officers and the mobility of people, lists can readily become outdated. If they are to be useful, it will be important to update on a yearly basis.

Finally, the lists organized can be useful to the change agent for many purposes. It can be used as a list to screen for potential legitimizers, obtain potential board and committee members, secure access to resources, and

recruit action persons for community development efforts. Finally, the list might be used for two-way communications. It could be used as a mailing list for community development messages, but it may also become a mechanism for feedback information and evaluation of community development efforts.

Reputational Approach

In the publication entitled "Identifying the Community Power Structure", Powers suggests a series of steps for using the reputational approach. They are as follows:

1. Defining The Geographical Area

   The first step for the change agent is identifying the geographical area in which community development issues, are to be resolved. The relevant geographical area may be a single community, a county or a region. The relevant geographical area may change depending upon the issue, e.g., the school district for educational issues, the city for city recreational issues.

2. Defining Issue Areas

   The next step involves identifying the issue areas which are of concern to community development organizations and change agents. These issue areas may include education, agriculture, industrial development, transportation, energy, environment, politics, and urban renewal. In addition to specific issue areas, it is suggested that questions be asked to determine who has power in the general affairs of the community. For example, if change agents are interested in identifying the power actors for health and recreation, they should seek information on these two specific issue areas plus the area of general affairs when interviewing knowledgeables.

3. Selecting Knowledgeables

   After selecting the issue areas, change agents need to select a number of knowledgeables to be interviewed. Knowledgeables are persons who are perceived to have knowledge of the community decision-making processes and the power actors who make decisions.

   Knowledgeables could include bankers, newspaper editors, extension workers, secretaries of chamber of commerce, local government officials, ministers, planners, businessmen, and others. Generally knowledgeables should be selected from different community sectors, such as business, government, education, agriculture, religion and politics.

   As a working guideline, Powers suggests the following number of interviews by size of community:

Size of Community	Number of Knowledgeables To Interview
250 - 1,000	5
1,001 - 2,500	7
2,501 - 5,000	8
5,001 - 10,000	10
10,001 - 100,000	15

If the list of persons named as power actors is not duplicated several times after the suggested number of knowledgeables have been interviewed, it will be necessary to identify and interview more knowledgeables.

4. Interviewing Knowledgeables

After identifying the knowledgeables, the change agent must develop the approach to be used in interviewing them. It is important for the change agent to:

a. tell the prospective knowledgeable who you are,
b. establish the objective of your interview,
c. state the reasons you desire this information and
d. tell the person how the information will be used.

It is important for the change agent to assure the knowledgeables that the information they provide will not be published or released in any way which would identify them as the source.

Prior to interviewing the knowledgeables, the change agent should develop questions for each of the selected issue areas. A sample question in industrial development might be:

> "Who are the persons in this community who have the most influence (carry out the most weight, can get things done) in industrial development issues, such as obtaining a new industry or establishing a new industrial park?"

In order to speed up interviewing, it is probably best to confine the number of issue areas to four or less, including the area of general affairs. Another suggestion is to ask a question as to which are the most influential groups in the community.

These questions should be developed into a questionnaire with appropriate space to record the names that are given . Before interviewing the knowledgeables, it is suggested that the change agent write down his own perceptions of the persons likely to be the power actors in each issue area being suggested. Following this step the knowledgeables should be interviewed.

5. Summarizing

Once the knowledgeables have been interviewed, the change agent should summarize the names of the reputed power actors for each issue area, indicating how many times each one has been named. The pool of power actors is made up of those individuals named several times. The assumption is made that the individuals with the most "votes" in each issue area are the top power actors of the community for that issue area. The list of top power actors for all issue areas constitutes the power pool for the community.

6. Checking Reliability

Once the pool of power actors has been identified, the change agent should check on the reliability of the lists. One method for checking reliability is to go to the two or three persons named most frequently and ask these people the same questions the change agents asked the knowledgeables. If the information from the knowledgeables has been accurate, the answers obtained from these persons should closely duplicate the list we already have. If additional names are suggested by more than one of these persons, the change agent should include them in the power actor pool, particularly if they have been previously mentioned by at least one knowledgeable.

At this point the change agent has identified the pool of community power actors. It is suggested that the entire process be repeated at intervals of two or three years.

The above has briefly outlined the procedures for using the reputational approach. For more details on how to use this approach, the reader is referred to the Powers publications noted in the references section.

Decision-Making Approach

When using the decision-making approach to identify the community power actors, the change agent selects a number of community decisions which are representative of all community decisions. These decisions may have been made in the past and the resulting action programs completed. In addition, the change agent may select some current community issues which have just been initiated and for which decisions have not yet been made.

As in the reputational approach, the change agent should select community decision areas which are highly relevant to community development or to the issue areas in which he will likely be initiating development efforts in the future. Through studying these decisions or issues, the change agent should

be able to identify those power actors who actually participated in making decisions and who may likely participate in making future decisions in those issue areas.

In the decision-making approach, the change agent would study the issue from its initiation through its completion to determine the decision makers at each of the stages. Although this process is very time consuming as previously noted, it does provide the opportunity to determine who the legitimizers were and whether or not they became involved in the more action oriented phases of the issue. It also provides the opportunity to identify the action oriented leaders.

There are several techniques which the change agent might use to determine the decision-makers. Through interviews with actual participants in action programs which have been completed, the change agent can reconstruct the steps of the action program and ask questions to determine who made decisions at each of these steps. In addition to interviews, the change agent might study any documents related to the resolution of the issue to determine who the decision-makers were. This might involve reading minutes of meetings, special reports, committee reports, newspaper accounts and other written documents pertaining to the issue.

In areas where the issue is just emerging, the change agent might attempt to attend all of the formal meetings related to the issue and then determine who the decision-makers are. Also, personal interviews and informal contacts can be sources for additional information on issues which are in process or are just emerging as relevant issues.

After determining the decision-makers for several issue areas, the change agent can then establish a pool of power actors. As with the reputational approach, if the change agent studies several decisions in different issue areas, he can determine whether a generalized power structure exists that affects most issue areas or whether specialized power structures exist which deal with single issues. Finally, as new community issues emerge, the change agent can follow these issues to determine the decision-makers.

Social Participation

In the final approach, social participation, the change agent would study the participation of community members in voluntary associations. Since it would

be virtually impossible for change agents to study all the voluntary associations within a community due to time and financial constraints, the change agent would select a number of key community voluntary associations. The criteria for selecting relevant community voluntary associations might be the extent to which the voluntary associations are oriented to community affairs, their resource base and/or the perceived relevancy of the voluntary associations to the change agent's development program.

After identifying the key community voluntary associations, the change agent would obtain lists of the membership, officers, board of directors and committees for each key voluntary association. This data might be gathered by making a personal contact with one of the voluntary associations officers and asking him for a membership list and a listing of the officers, board of directors and committees.

Following the collection of data from the selected voluntary associations, the change agent would compare and determine the overlaps in membership, officers, board of directors and committees. The change agent might arbitrarily assign weights to the various types of participation in voluntary associations. For example, membership in a voluntary association might be assigned 1 point; serving on a committee or board - 2 points; serving as a committee chairman or board chairman - 3 points; and serving as an officer - 4 points.

After assigning scores to each individual for the various types of participation in each voluntary association in which they had memberships, a total participation score for each member can be determined. Those with the highest participation scores would be defined as the pool of community power actors.

Like the positional approach, it would be essential to update this on a regular basis, preferably each year or every other year. While the social participation approach may not identify the most powerful individuals to affect community decision-making, the change agent would be able to determine the most active individuals in the organizational activities of the community. The major disadvantages of this approach are its effectiveness in determining the key decision-makers in community affairs and the time and financial constraints of the change agent in carrying out an extensive study using this approach.

DISCUSSION

This paper has focused on (1) four different approaches for identifying the community power actors, (2) a comparison of the four approaches and (3) an outline of how professional change agents might use each of the four approaches.

Earlier, it was suggested that change agents use either a combination of approaches or combine elements from the various approaches into one approach since the four approaches have some tendency to identify different types of power actors. For change agents with primary roles in community development, it is suggested that at a minimum the positional approach be used to maintain an updated list of power actors. This approach should identify those power actors who are in positions of authority. This approach may identify many of the power actors who are not in elected positions if corporation executives, business heads, board members and other non-elected positions are included in the positional lists. The major disadvantage with solely relying on the positional approach, however, is its limitations in identifying key power actors who may operate "behind the scenes" and not have visibility in community affairs.

The positional approach may be supplemented by combining elements from the other three approaches to identify those power actors who are not in authoritative positions. One approach which the change agent could use is to combine elements from the reputational and decision-making approaches. While using the basic technique of interviewing knowledgeables with a questionnaire as in the reputational approach, the questionnaire might be designed to gather two types of data. First, a few questions might be asked to gather perceptions from the knowledgeables about the reputation for power. An example of this is the question which asks who has the most power to affect decisions within the community when you think of all the activities of the community.

The second type of questions relates to asking about who made the decisions in issue areas which have already been resolved or blocked by the community. For example, a question might be asked to determine the actual decision-makers for a bond issue to build a new community hospital. Also, questions can be asked to determine who was successful in blocking community issues that have been defeated by the community. Asking the knowledgeables about actual de-

cisions which have been made is combining elements from the decision-making approach. This can overcome some of the limitations often mentioned about the use of the reputational approach.

Finally, the authors believe it is essential for professional change agents, particularly those concerned with community development issues, to have knowledge and understanding of the community decision-makers and how they affect community decisions. Since legitimation with power actors is an important step in the process of community change, failure to obtain legitimation may result in the defeat of the change agent's program. The allocation of some time and resources to identifying power actors, maintaining updated lists, and building linkages and relationships with community power actors may enhance most community development efforts.

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